

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3922
INFO AMCONSUL BELFAST
AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 03768

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, PEBR, UK, EI
SUBJECT: NORTHERN IRELAND: MASON REBUTS LYNCH

REF: DUBLIN 457

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED
SUMMARY - NI SECRETARY MASON MARCH 6 TOLD COMMONS THAT
IRISH PM LYNCH'S RECENT STATEMENT THAT ONLY TWO PERCENT
OF THE VIOLENT INCIDENTS IN NI ORIGINATED IN THE
REPUBLIC (REFTEL) WAS "WRONG" AND BASED ON AN EXTREMELY
NARROW DEFINITION OF CROSS-BORDER INCIDENTS. MASON
WENT ON TO OUTLINE HMG'S CURRENT ASSESSMENT OF THE NI
SECURITY SITUATION AND THE POLICY IT INTENDS TO FOLLOW.
NO NEW INITIATIVES ARE ENVISAGED. PREDICTABLY, TORY
NI SPOKESMAN AIREY NEAVE AND UNIONIST MPS CALLED FOR
TOUGHER SECURITY MEASURES. THUS THIS YEAR'S FIRST
DEBATE OF THE NI SECURITY SITUATION YIELDED LITTLE
MORE THAN A REAFFIRMATION OF PREVIOUS POSITIONS BY ALL
SIDES. END SUMMARY.

1. OPENING THE FIRST 1978 DEBATE OF THE NI SECURITY
OUTLOOK, NI SECRETARY ROY MASON DIRECTLY REFUTED IRISH
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PM LYNCH'S RECENT ASSERTION THAT ONLY TWO PERCENT OF
THE VIOLENT INCIDENTS IN NI ORIGINATED IN THE REPUBLIC.
CHARACTERIZING LYNCH'S STATEMENT AS "WRONG", MASON
POINTED OUT THAT HE HAD USED AN EXTREMELY NARROW DEFINI-
TION OF CROSS-BORDER INCIDENTS WHICH COUNTED ONLY THOSE
CASES WHERE TERRORISTS FIRED FROM THE REPUBLIC INTO NI
OR CROSSED THE BORDER FOR A SPECIFIC ACTION AND IMME-

DIATELY RETURNED. FAR MORE SERIOUS, MASON SAID, ARE THE USE OF THE REPUBLIC AS A SAFEHAVEN FOR PIRA ACTIVISTS ON THE RUN AND AS A SUPPLY CHANNEL FOR WEAPONS AND EXPLOSIVES. MASON, HOWEVER, PRAISED THE CONTINUED CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION BETWEEN THE GARDA AND THE RUC.

2. THE BALANCE OF MASON'S SPEECH CONSISTED LARGELY OF A DESCRIPTION OF THE PRESENT SITUATION AND A REAFFIRMATION OF HMG'S CURRENT SECURITY POLICY. THE PRINCIPAL POINTS INCLUDED:

- THE PIRA'S LA MON HOUSE BOMBING AND ATTACKS ON SECURITY PERSONNEL HAD FAILED TO REKINDLE SECTARIAN STRIFE;
- HMG WILL CONTINUE TO KEEP "RELENTLESS PRESSURE" ON THE TERRORISTS;
- THE SECURITY FORCES HAVE HAD CONSIDERABLE SUCCESS IN REDUCING TERRORIST STRENGTH THROUGH EFFECTIVE LAW ENFORCEMENT -- 1,200 SUSPECTS WERE CHARGED WITH TERRORIST ACTIVITIES IN 1976 AND 960 WERE CONVICTED; OVER 1,300 WERE CHARGED IN 1977, WITH 1,100 BEING CONVICTED;
- THERE WERE NO POLITICAL RESTRAINTS OR INHIBITIONS ON THE RUC OR THE ARMY;
- THERE WOULD BE NO AMNESTY FOR THOSE CONVICTED OF CRIMINAL VIOLENCE;
- THE EFFECTS OF HMG'S SECURITY EFFORTS HAD FORCED THE PIRA TO REGROUP AND REORGANIZE; AND

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 03768

-- THE VAST MAJORITY OF NI PEOPLE TOTALLY REJECT THE
PIRA'S PHILOSOPHY AND AIMS.

3. CONSERVATIVE NI SPOKESMAN AIREY NEAVE, AS EXPECTED,
STRESSED THE NEED FOR TOUGHER ACTION TO CONTROL TERROR-
ISM, SUGGESTED THAT THE PROVISIONAL SINN FEIN BE OUT-
LAWED AND CALLED ON HMG TO "SECURE A CHANGE IN THE
ATTITUDE OF MR. LYNCH AND HIS GOVERNMENT".

4. THE THRUST, IF NOT THE DETAIL OF THE INTERVENTIONS
BY UNIONIST MPS AND OTHERS WAS EQUALLY PREDICTABLE.
UUUC LEADER JAMES MOLYNEAUX DEMANDED TOUGHER SECURITY
MEASURES, REJECTED UNIFICATION AND ASSERTED THAT THE
PIRA WISHED TO CRUSH DEMOCRACY IN THE REPUBLIC AS WELL
AS NI. REV. IAN PAISLEY STRUCK A SIMILAR NOTE AND
CALLED FOR THE REINTRODUCTION OF THE DEATH PENALTY.
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5. COMMENT: THE DEBATE WAS LARGELY A NON-EVENT.
EXCEPT FOR MASON'S CHALLENGE OF LYNCH, IT CONTAINED
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NOTHING NEW. ACCORDING TO NI OFFICE SOURCES, MASON'S
REBUTTAL OF LYNCH'S STATEMENT REFLECTED HIS BELIEF
THAT LYNCH DELIBERATELY SOUGHT TO MISLEAD IN DOWN-
PLAYING THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CROSS-BORDER CONNECTION.
HMG BELIEVES THE REPUBLIC IS AN IMPORTANT REFUGE FOR
PIRA ACTIVISTS AND LEADERS, AS WELL AS AN IMPORTANT
SUPPLY POINT. MASON THEREFORE SOUGHT TO SET THE
RECORD STRAIGHT AND, AT THE SAME TIME, INCREASE PRESSUR
ON THE GOI TO AGREE TO EXTRADITION OF PIRA ACTIVISTS IN
THE REPUBLIC WHO ARE WANTED IN NI OR THE UK. THE NIO
IS NOT SANGUINE ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF LYNCH ACCEDING
TO EXTRADITION, HOWEVER. FROM OUR VANTAGE POINT, IT
SEEMS LIKELY THAT THE CROSS-BORDER ISSUE HAS BECOME A
NEW IRRITANT IN HMG/GOI RELATIONS. BUT AS THINGS ARE
SHAPING UP, THERE IS LIKELY TO BE A LONG AND CONTENTIOU
AGENDA FOR THE NEXT MEETING BETWEEN THE TWO PRIME
MINISTERS. THAT MIGHT NOT BE SUCH A BAD THING, SINCE
IT WOULD ALLOW THEM TO CLEAR THE AIR AND PERHAPS PAVE
THE WAY FOR CLOSER COOPERATION IN THE FUTURE. END

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